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Dan Pontefract

Working on Purpose

To Achieve Your Purpose You Must First Know Thyself

It is important to know thyself if one wants to achieve a sense of purpose.

Posted September 30, 2016



Abraham Maslow once wrote, “It isn't normal to know what we want. It is a rare and difficult psychological achievement,” but I contend team members ought to try to prove Maslow wrong. Aldous Huxley perhaps provided a positive antidote, when he wrote, “Knowing who in fact we are results in Good Being, and Good Being results in the most appropriate kind of good doing.”

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It is critically important to know thyself, if one wants to achieve a sense of purpose in life or at work.

Kelsy Trigg, a leader in the high-tech space, was having dinner with me one night in 2011 when she shared her personal purpose statement. Kelsy highlighted something that night that really made me think.

Do people who exhibit purpose define themselves with some form of personal purpose statement?

In the words of Huxley, does this definition aid “good being and good doing”?

Kelsy's working life purpose was and continues to be a journey. Whether as an independent contractor or analyst working for banks and insurance companies, or as a leader (director, head, vice-president) in high-tech, she is highly regarded. But the path to purpose came with a few bumps along the way.

Although Kelsy is someone who continuously puts purpose before profit, she had to sort through what gives her true meaning in life and at work. Her giving attitude, thoughtful

consummate and balanced professional that sees her career as a journey of exploration.

Over that dinner, we launched into a discussion about purpose, specifically about one's personally defined sense of purpose. Kelsy pulls no punches. Her purpose is a testament to her character, and to her self-created definition of how she lives life, both at work and personally. Though it was likely years in the making, when Kelsy put pen to paper, the words came easily and she distilled it into:

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- I decide to live my life filled with joy.
- I decide to be generous, open-hearted, and loving.
- I decide to show up whole-heartedly and be present.
- I choose courage, integrity, peace and love.

This personal purpose statement has served Kelsy well. Her ability to define who she is and how she will operate—deciding to live and work through the behaviors and attributes out-

this clarity until her late 30s. Her prior experiences, roles and organizations helped her to develop enough acumen so that she could reach a point in her life to define what truly mattered.



Source: CC Daimon Eklund

Indeed, over another dinner in 2015, Kelsy divulged how important the personal purpose statement had become for her.

“For me, the language ‘I decide’ is very powerful, whether it’s deciding how I show up or deciding what my next step in something is. This doesn’t ensure a particular outcome or necessarily impact those around me, but it does provide a sense of grounding and choice about how I respond to my internal and external environment, no matter what my surroundings hold. When I internalized this, it brought a sense of calm for me. My happiness is my responsibility. How I show up is my choice.”

- Defining yourself through a personal purpose statement is an important step in the quest for workplace and life purpose.
- Individuals should not be afraid to revisit the statement over time to determine if it continues to resonate.

In his seminal 1989 book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey encouraged people to create a personal mission statement within the second habit, "Begin with the End in Mind." While it may seem like semantics, I would prefer to call it a "Personal Declaration of Purpose."

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This differs from Covey's "Personal Mission Statements," for it is purpose that one is seeking to declare and then establish, not a mission.

The question a successful team member is continuously asking and answering—who indeed is creating a personal sense of purpose—is:

"Who am I in life and at work?"

definition not a one-time commandment. It can occur in your 20s or your 90s or at several points in between.

Philosophers and leaders like Plato, Socrates, Heraclitus or Pythagoras, were alleged to have bandied about the maxim “Know Thyself” in the agora on many an occasion. Self-understanding—knowing oneself—is essential to this. It leads us to surface a critical point.

Personal purpose is the perpetual journey to continually develop, define and decide your what, who and how. When we ask these questions we commit to develop, define and decide our calling, our personal purpose. We pledge to begin knowing thyself.

Constantly redefining who one is in life and at work increases the likelihood that your personal purpose will be realized. Being relentless in the quest for personal purpose is key to achieving the sweet spot. An excellent starting action is to define one’s self through a personal declaration of purpose. It may change over time. That can actually be healthy.

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Just like Kelsy.



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Dan Pontefract is Chief Envisioner at TELUS, where he heads the Transformation Office, a future-of-work consulting group. He is the author of *The Purpose Effect* as well as *Flat Army*.

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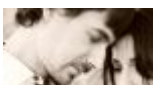


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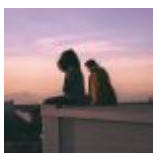
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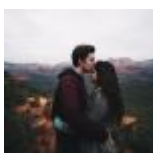
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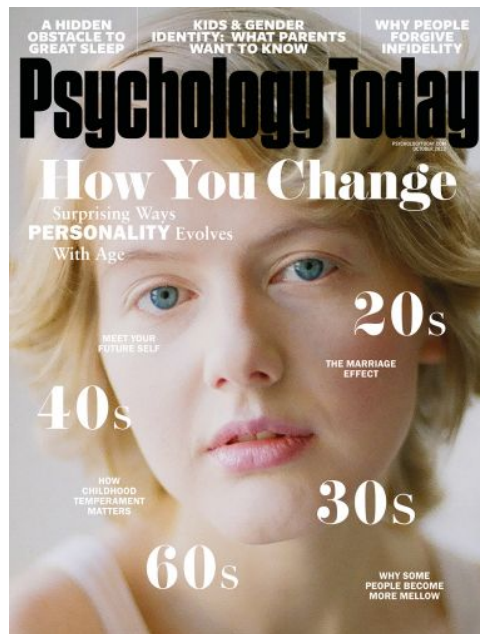
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